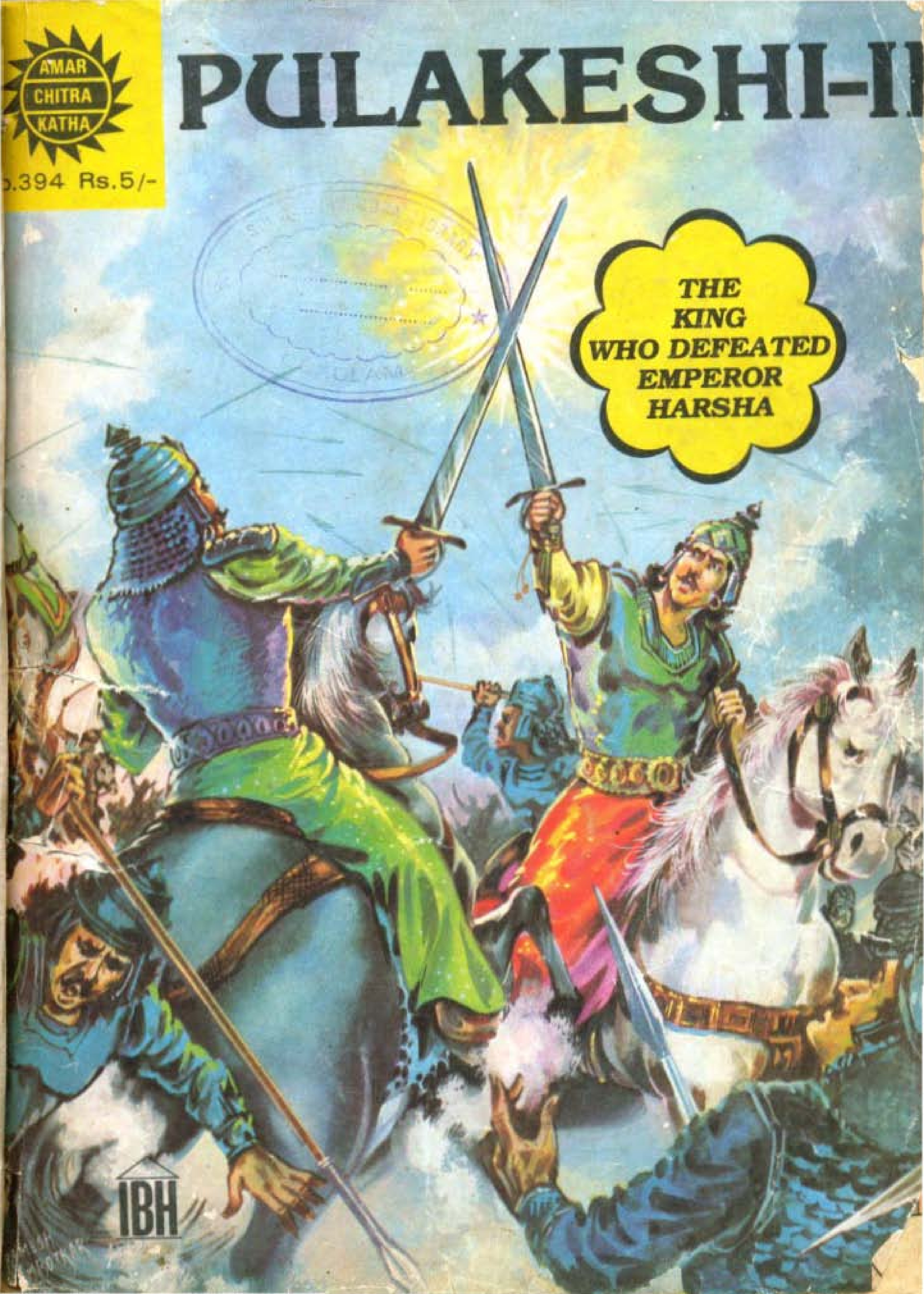

AMAR
CHITRA
KATHA
PULAKESHI-II
.394 Rs.5/-
THE KING WHO DEFEATED EMPEROR HARSHA
IBH

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PULAKESHI—II

Pulakeshi II, who ruled from A.D. 610 to 642, is celebrated in history for inflicting a defeat on the mighty Harshavardhana of Thaneswar on the banks of the Narmada.

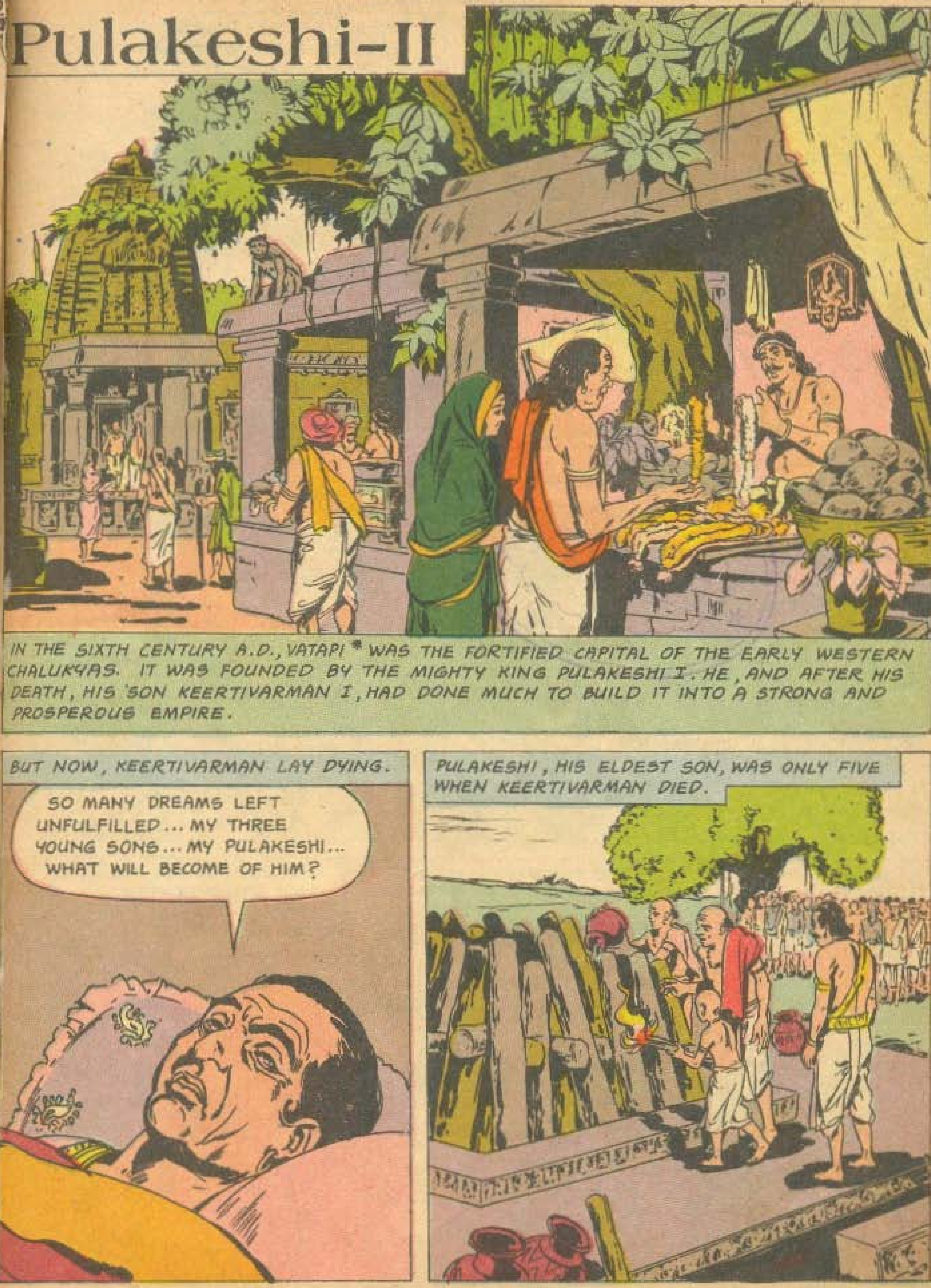
During his career as king, Pulakeshi fought war after war to win laurels. Yet, Pulakeshi's story is such as to illustrate the futility of war. Pulakeshi fought a battle with the Pallava king Mahendravarman I, in which the latter was defeated and killed. This in turn led to Narasimhavarman I, son of Mahendravarman I, taking revenge on Pulakeshi. In this second encounter with the Pallavas, Pulakeshi was defeated and killed.

The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang has left us an account of his travels in Pulakeshi's kingdom. He says, ".....the people,who are tall of stature and have a stern and vindictive character,are honest and simple, are grateful to their benefactors and ruthless to their enemies." We have depicted Pulakeshi's relationship with his uncle Mangalesha, in the light of the latter part of this statement.

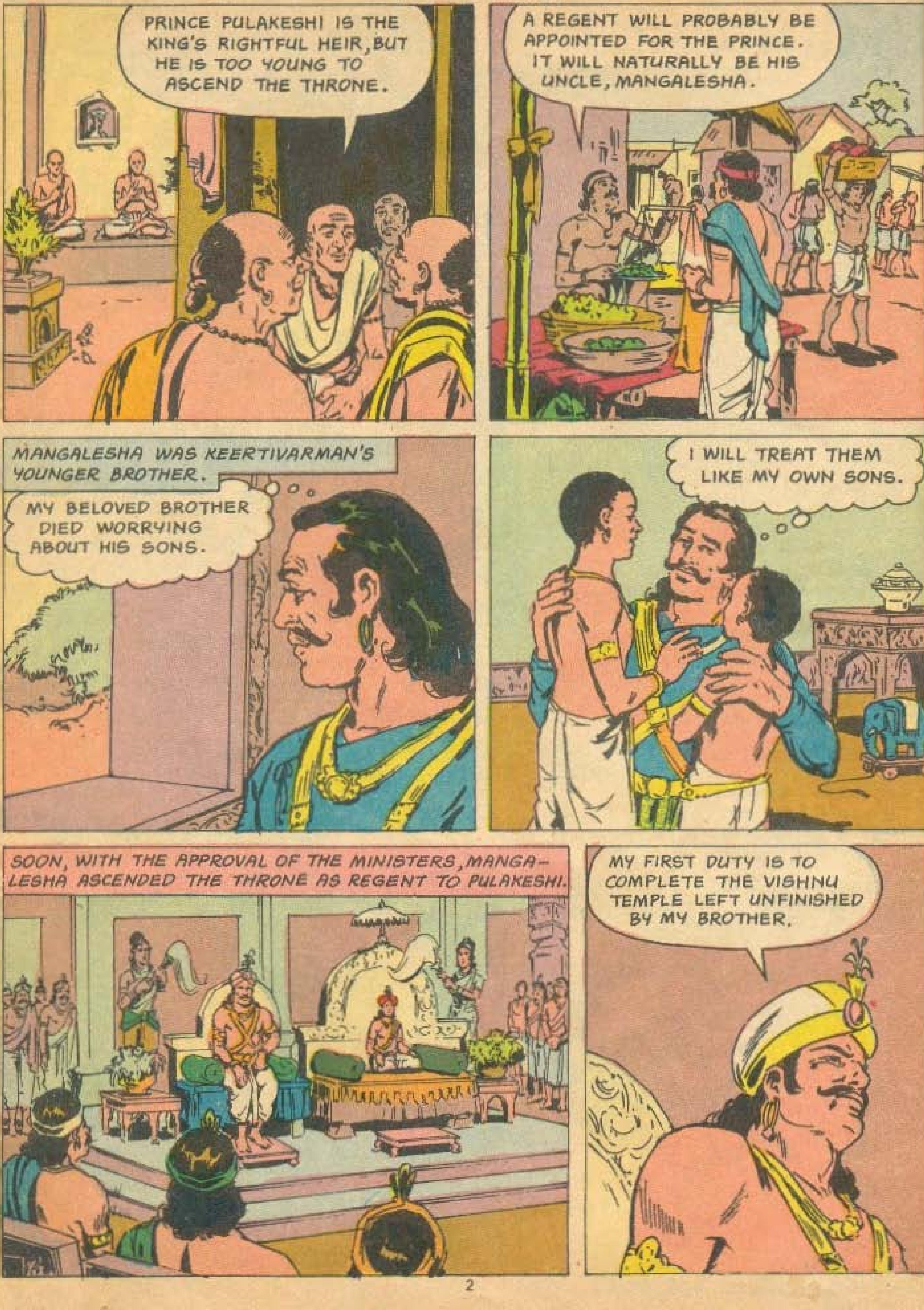
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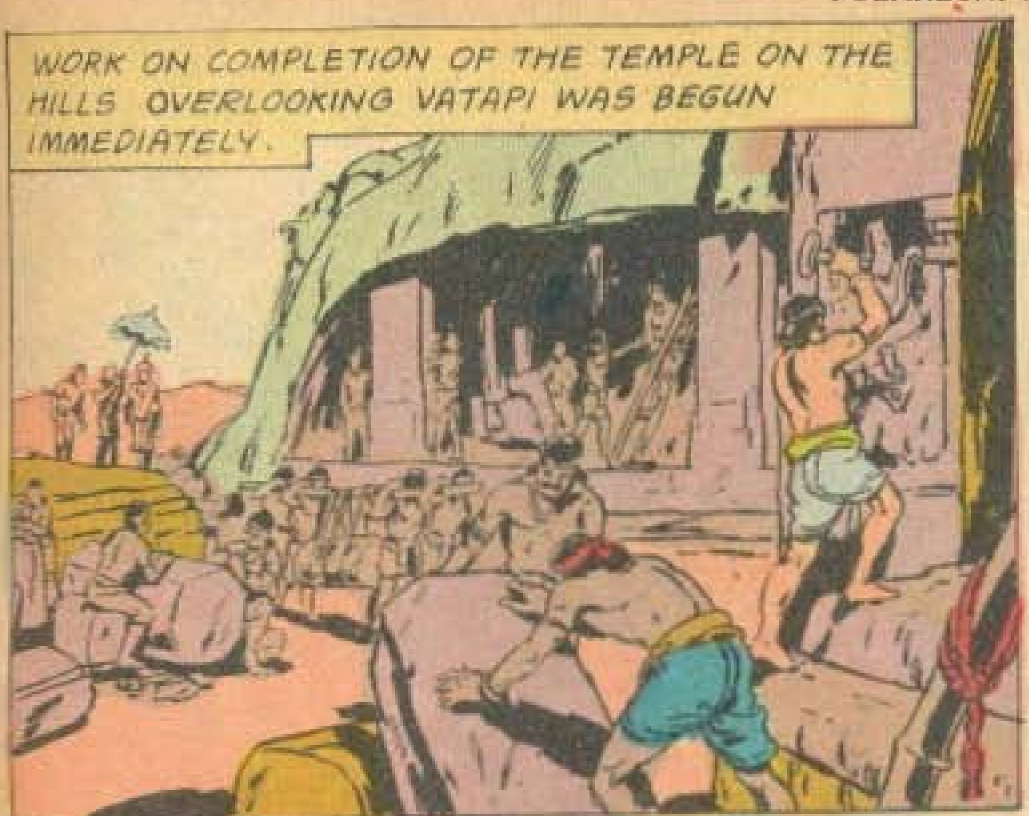
THE SLAYING OF ABHIMANYU

Pulakeshi-II



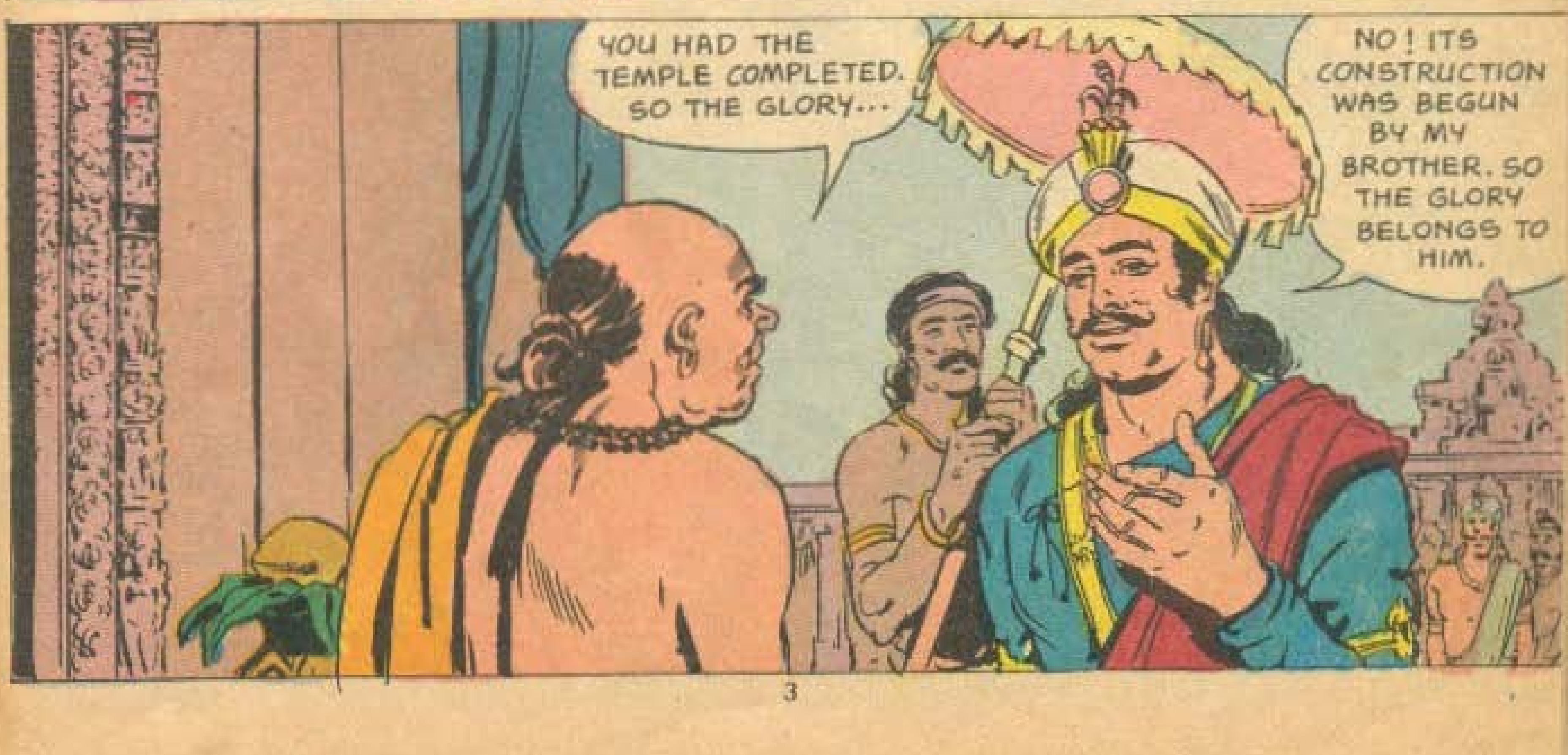
* MODERN BADAMI IN KARNATAKA


PRINCE PULAKESHI IS THE KING'S RIGHTFUL HEIR, BUT HE IS TOO YOUNG TO ASCEND THE THRONE.
A REGENT WILL PROBABLY BE APPOINTED FOR THE PRINCE. IT WILL NATURALLY BE HIS UNCLE, MANGALESHA.
MANGALESHA WAS KEERTIVARMAN'S YOUNGER BROTHER.
MY BELOVED BROTHER DIED WORRYING ABOUT HIS SONS.
I WILL TREAT THEM LIKE MY OWN SONS.
SOON, WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE MINISTERS, MANGALESHA ASCENDED THE THRONE AS REGENT TO PULAKESHI.
MY FIRST DUTY IS TO COMPLETE THE VISHNU TEMPLE LEFT UNFINISHED BY MY BROTHER.


WORK ON COMPLETION OF THE TEMPLE ON THE HILLS OVERLOOKING VATAPI WAS BEGUN IMMEDIATELY.

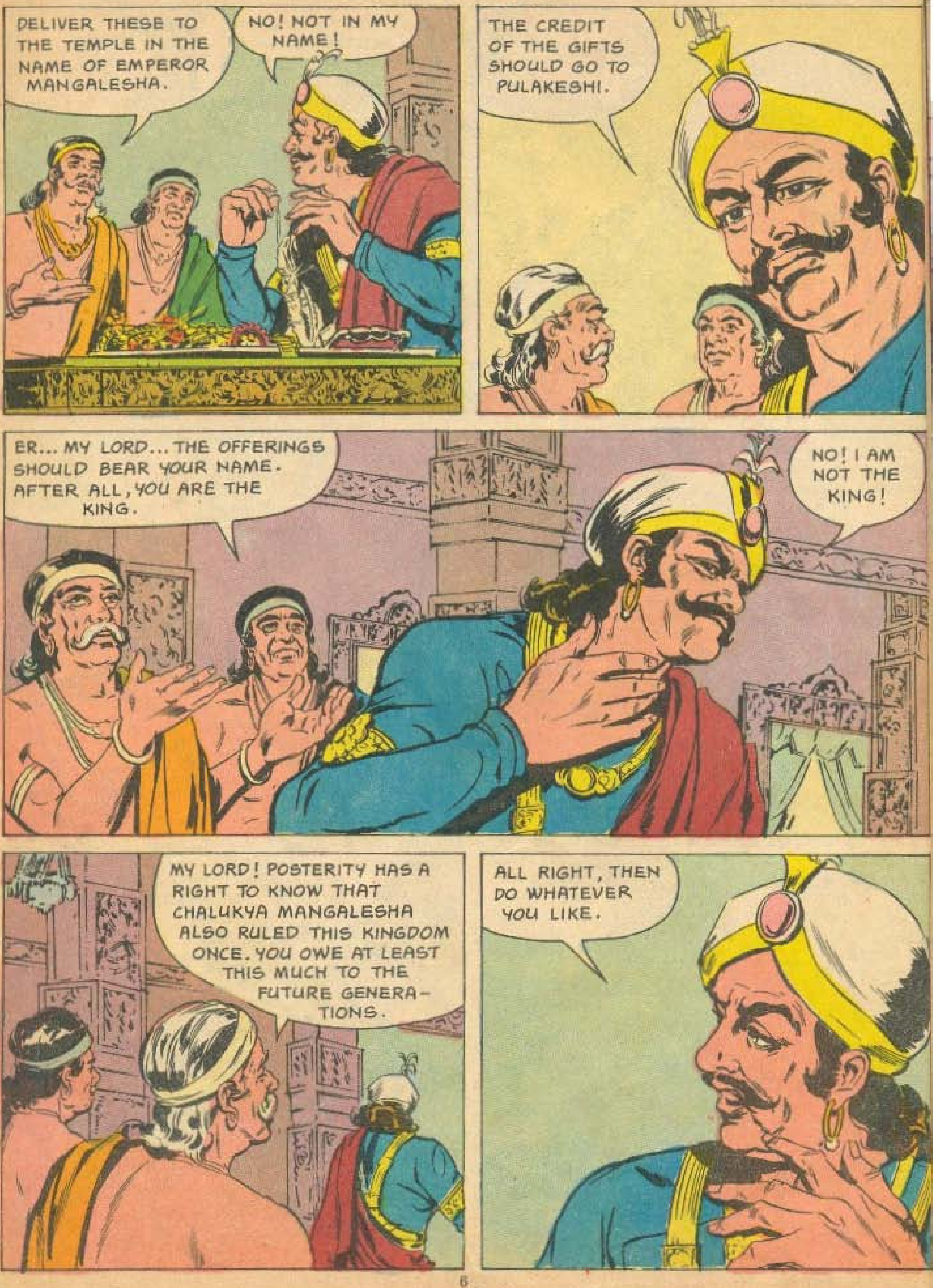

EXQUISITE! THIS PILLAR IS MARVEL-LOUS.


SOON THE ROCK-CUT TEMPLE WAS COMPLETED.
IN THE NAME OF THE CHALUKYA MANGALESHA, KING OF KINGS...
WAIT! I AM THE REGENT, NOT THE KING.


YOU HAD THE TEMPLE COMPLETED. SO THE GLORY...
NO! ITS CONSTRUCTION WAS BEGUN BY MY BROTHER. SO THE GLORY BELONGS TO HIM.


MANGALESHA THEN APPOINTED PANDITS TO TEACH LITTLE PULAKESHI AND PREPARE HIM TO TAKE OVER THE REINS OF THE KINGDOM.
A KING MUST ALWAYS LOOK TO THE WELL-BEING OF HIS SUBJECTS. HE MUST BE LIKE A PARENT TO THEM.
OH! IT'S THE KING HIMSELF ARRIVING.
REGENT, NOT KING. PLEASE CONTINUE, SIR. I'VE COME TO SEE HOW YOUR PUPIL IS GETTING ON.
YEARS PASSED AND PULAKESHI GREW UP INTO A GALLANT YOUNG MAN.
WATCH THE PRINCE'S SWORD-PLAY. IT'S MARVELLOUS!
AND HE IS KIND AND FAIR-MINDED TOO. HE WILL MAKE AN IDEAL KING.
UNCLE!
SO YOU ARE GROWING INTO A FINE SWORDS-MAN, EH!
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M STRIVING HARD.


KEEP IT UP! SOON YOU WILL BECOME AN UN-RIVALLED SWORDSMAN. BUT YOU MUST NOT NEGLECT YOUR LESSONS IN LAW.
I WILL NOT, UNCLE.
FATHER, IS PULAKESHI REALLY THE BEST SWORDSMAN AMONG US ALL?
UNDOUBTEDLY, SON!
OH!
MY LORD, A VASSAL RAJA HAS SENT MANY PRICELESS JEWELS AS A TRIBUTE.
LET US SEE HOW MUCH HIS TRIBUTE IS WORTH!
WELL! MAKE A GIFT OF THEM TO THE TEMPLE OF VISHNU.


DELIVER THESE TO THE TEMPLE IN THE NAME OF EMPEROR MANGALESHA.
NO! NOT IN MY NAME!
THE CREDIT OF THE GIFTS SHOULD GO TO PULAKESHI.
ER... MY LORD... THE OFFERINGS SHOULD BEAR YOUR NAME. AFTER ALL, YOU ARE THE KING.
NO! I AM NOT THE KING!
MY LORD! POSTERITY HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW THAT CHALUKYA MANGALESHA ALSO RULED THIS KINGDOM ONCE. YOU OWE AT LEAST THIS MUCH TO THE FUTURE GENERATIONS.
ALL RIGHT, THEN DO WHATEVER YOU LIKE.


AND SEND THE GENERAL TO ME. THE NEIGHBOURING KING HAS BEEN CREATING TROUBLE. HE MUST BE TAUGHT A LESSON.
MANGALESHA SOON LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND THE CHALUKYA EMPIRE.
LOOK, HOW THE KING FIGHTS.
HE SEEMS POSSESSED, SO FIERCE HE IS.
EVERY KING WITH WHOM HE FOUGHT HAD TO GIVE IN TO MANGALESHA.
YOU HAVE DEFEATED ALL THE NEIGHBOURING KINGS IN BATTLE, MAHARAJ.
MY AMBITION NOW IS TO LEAD AN EXPEDITION TO THE SHORES OF THE GANGA AND ERECT A PILLAR OF VICTORY THERE.
AND I'M SURE WE WILL DO THAT TOO!!


WHEN MANGALESHA RETURNED TO VATAPI, THERE WAS MUCH REJOICING IN THE CAPITAL. PULAKESHI, NOW 23, JOINED IN THE FESTIVITY.
UNCLE HAS BROUGHT GLORY TO THE CHALUKYAS. I WILL GO TO GREET HIM.
WHEN PULAKESHI WENT TO SEE HIS UNCLE —
ER... STOP, O PRINCE...
WHAT!
THE KING IS A LITTLE... ER... INDISPOSED TODAY. HE DOES NOT WANT TO SEE ANYONE.
NOT EVEN ME ?
ER... YOU SEE...
IT DOESN'T MATTER! I'LL COME LATER.


OH! IT IS YOU, SIR. PLEASE GO IN. THE KING IS EXPECTING YOU.
HE WILL SEE A MINISTER, BUT NOT ME? WHY?
IS UNCLE ANGRY WITH ME? WHAT HAVE I DONE?
OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THE CONFUSED HEIR OF THE CHALUKYA THRONE WATCHED A SUBTLE CHANGE COME OVER THE WHOLE COURT.
I FEEL EVERYONE IGNORES ME. EVEN THE GUARDS SEEM TO MOCK AT ME. OR AM I IMAGINING THINGS?


IT WAS NOT PULAKESHI'S IMAGINATION. THE COURTIERS HAD CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDE TO HIM BECAUSE MANGALESHA HAD CHANGED. FOR POWER HAD GONE TO THE HEAD OF THE ONCE SINCERE AND HONEST MANGALESHA.
FATHER, A RULER IS ONE WHO EARNS HIS KINGSHIP. YOU HAVE TRULY EARNED IT. WITH YOUR WISDOM, LOVE OF JUSTICE AND VALOUR, YOU DESERVE TO BE KING.
YOU ARE RIGHT, SON. WHY SHOULD I BE REGENT? WHY NOT KING? AND SHOULD I NOT DO SOMETHING FOR MY SON?
OH GOD! PULAKESHI HAS BECOME A THORN IN MY FLESH.
AND MANGALESHA TOOK A STEP FROM WHICH THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK.
ONE DAY —
PRINCE! PRINCE!
O PRINCE! DO NOT WASTE A MOMENT. LEAVE VATAPI AT ONCE.
LEAVE VATAPI? ARE YOU MAD?


YOUR UNCLE IS PLOTTING TO KILL YOU AND KEEP THE THRONE TO HIMSELF AND HIS OWN SON.
NO!
SO THAT IS WHY HE HAS CHANGED. MY UNCLE WHO BROUGHT ME UP LIKE HIS OWN SON — DOING THIS TO ME NOW...
TREASON! THIS IS BETRAYAL OF MY FATHER AND OF ME, HIS ELDEST SON AND RIGHTFUL HEIR.
UNCLE... I CANNOT CALL HIM UNCLE NOW... HE IS NO LONGER REGENT... HE IS A TRAITOR... AN ENEMY OF THE STATE AND I WILL DEAL WITH HIM AS SUCH.
BUT LEAVE VATAPI FOR THE TIME BEING. YOU ARE ONE AGAINST MANY HERE.
YES, I WILL FLEE THE PLACE NOW. BUT...


...I SWEAR BY THE ROYAL STANDARD OF MY FATHER THAT I WILL RETURN ONE DAY TO BE THE KING.
AND PULAKESHI, LIKE A MAN FOR WHOM ALL LIGHTS HAVE SUDDENLY GONE OUT, DEPARTED IN SECRECY...
...AND ROAMED THE KINGDOM.
HEY, YOU! OUT OF THE WAY! HAVE YOU NEVER WALKED ON A STREET BEFORE?
NO, MY FRIEND, NOT LIKE A COMMONER.
WELL, THIS IS AN EXPERIENCE TOO! TO BE AMONG MY PEOPLE, UNRECOGNIZED, AND SEE THEM AS THEY REALLY ARE.



KINGSHIP! IT IS A BURDEN TOO WEIGHTY TO BEAR.
GOOD DAY, STRANGER. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
I COME FROM VATAPI.
AH! THAT NEST OF SNAKES! MANGALESHA WILL NOT GET AWAY WITH WHAT HE HAS DONE!
SO THE NEWS HAS SPREAD!
A LITTLE AHEAD MORE PEOPLE WERE DISCUSSING THE SAME ISSUE.
MY FRIENDS, MANGALESHA HAS COMMITTED A DASTARDLY DEED IN PROCLAIMING HIMSELF KING.
YES! HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE CARETAKER. HE SHOULD HAVE VACATED THE THRONE TO INSTAL PULAKESHI, THE RIGHTFUL HEIR, ON IT.


BUT DO ALL PEOPLE FEEL LIKE THIS ?
YES, OF COURSE ! EVERY RIGHT-THINKING CITIZEN WILL REMAIN LOYAL TO PRINCE PULAKESHI. I WONDER WHERE OUR UNFORTUNATE PRINCE IS NOW ?
HE IS RIGHT HERE.
I AM PULAKESHI.
MOST NOBLE PRINCE, WE ARE HONOURED TO HAVE YOU AMONG US.
IT IS YOU WE WANT AS OUR KING.
I CANNOT FORGET YOUR GRANDFATHER, THE FIRST PULAKESHI, OR YOUR FATHER, THE NOBLE KEERTIVARMAN.



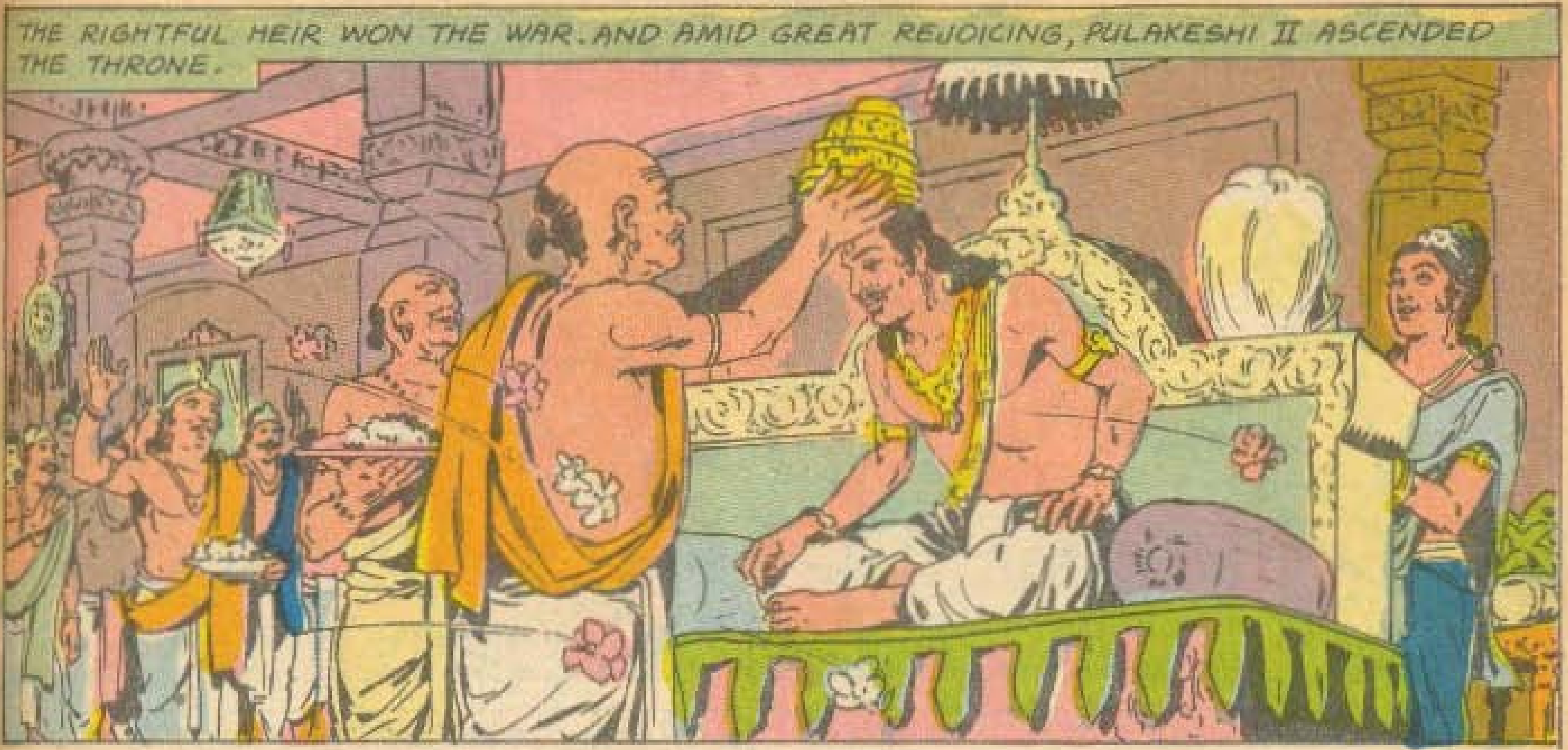
CONTD ON PAGE NO 18



* IDENTIFIED IN ANANTPUR DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH


PULAKESHI LOST HIS SWORD.
JUST THEN—


SOON YOU WILL BECOME AN UNBEATABLE SWORDSMAN. BUT YOU MUST NOT NEGLECT YOUR LESSONS IN LAW.
I CANNOT...
BUT I MUST...
I WILL...


THE RIGHTFUL HEIR WON THE WAR. AND AMID GREAT REJOICING, PULAKESHI II ASCENDED THE THRONE.


MY LORD, THIS CRIPPLING CIVIL WAR HAS DISRUPTED THE ENTIRE KINGDOM. WE ARE SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES ON ALL SIDES. OUR VASSALS ARE REVOLTING.
THEY WILL BE DEALT WITH APPROPRIATELY. I WILL BRING BACK PEACE AND STABILITY TO MY KINGDOM.


PULAKESHI SET OUT TO DEAL WITH HIS FOES AND QUELL THE REVOLTS. HE MARCHED FIRST AGAINST THE TWO REBEL CHIEFS APPAYIKA AND GOVINDA.


PULAKESHI BROUGHT THEM TO THEIR KNEES IN A BATTLE ON THE BANKS OF THE BHAIMARTHI* RIVER. IT WAS A BATTLE IN WHICH BOTH SIDES FOUGHT ON ELEPHANT BACKS.

* RIVER BHIMA.



* KING OF WHAT IS NOW DAKSHINA KANNADA
** MODERN ELEPHANTA ISLANDS



* PRESENT-DAY NARMADA


THE NEXT DAY, THE TWO ARMIES CONFRONTED EACH OTHER ACROSS THE RIVER AND A FIERCE BATTLE ENSUED.
AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY, IN HARSHA'S CAMP—
MY LORD, THEY ...WE ...THAT IS... OUR ... WE...
SPEAK CLEARLY, MAN. WHAT IS ALL THE EXCITEMENT ABOUT? IT IS OUR DAY, IS IT NOT?
THEY... I MEAN, OUR...
I AM SORRY, MY LORD. IT IS OUR ARMY THAT HAS HAD TO RETREAT...
RETREAT? RETREAT! I HAVE NEVER KNOWN SUCH A WORD! ADVANCE TEN STEPS TOMORROW THEN TO COMPENSATE FOR TODAY'S RETREAT!
BUT OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, DESPITE HARSHA HIMSELF LEADING HIS ARMY WITH THE FAMOUS ELEPHANT BATTALION...
...HE WAS ROUTED BY PULAKESHI.
THE FIRST DEFEAT IN MY LIFE! PULAKESHI— I'VE MET MY MATCH IN YOU.

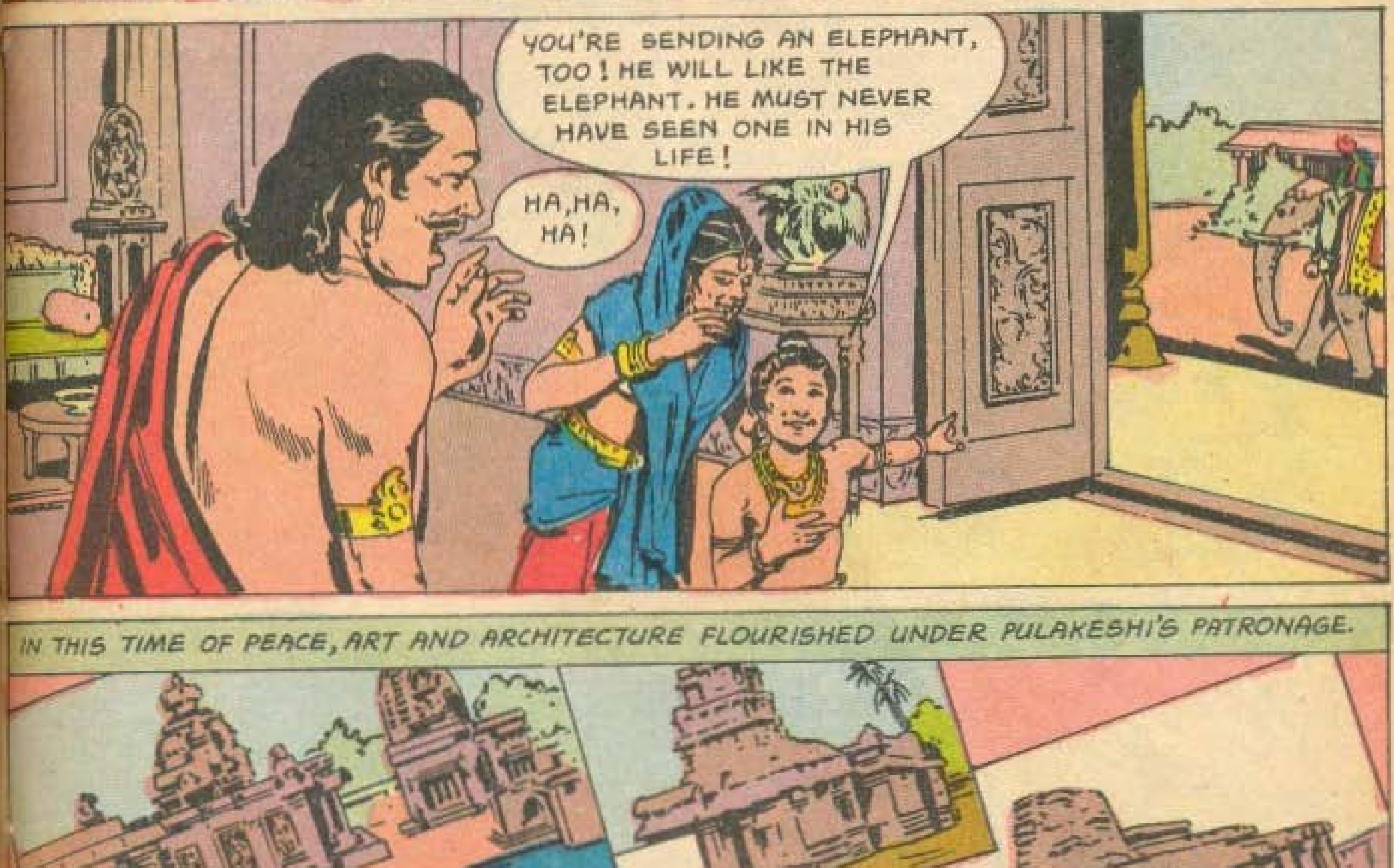


* SUPREME LORD (THE TITLE PULAKESHI ASSUMED)
** TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS (KARNATAKA, MAHARASHTRA AND KONKAN)



* MODERN PAITHAN





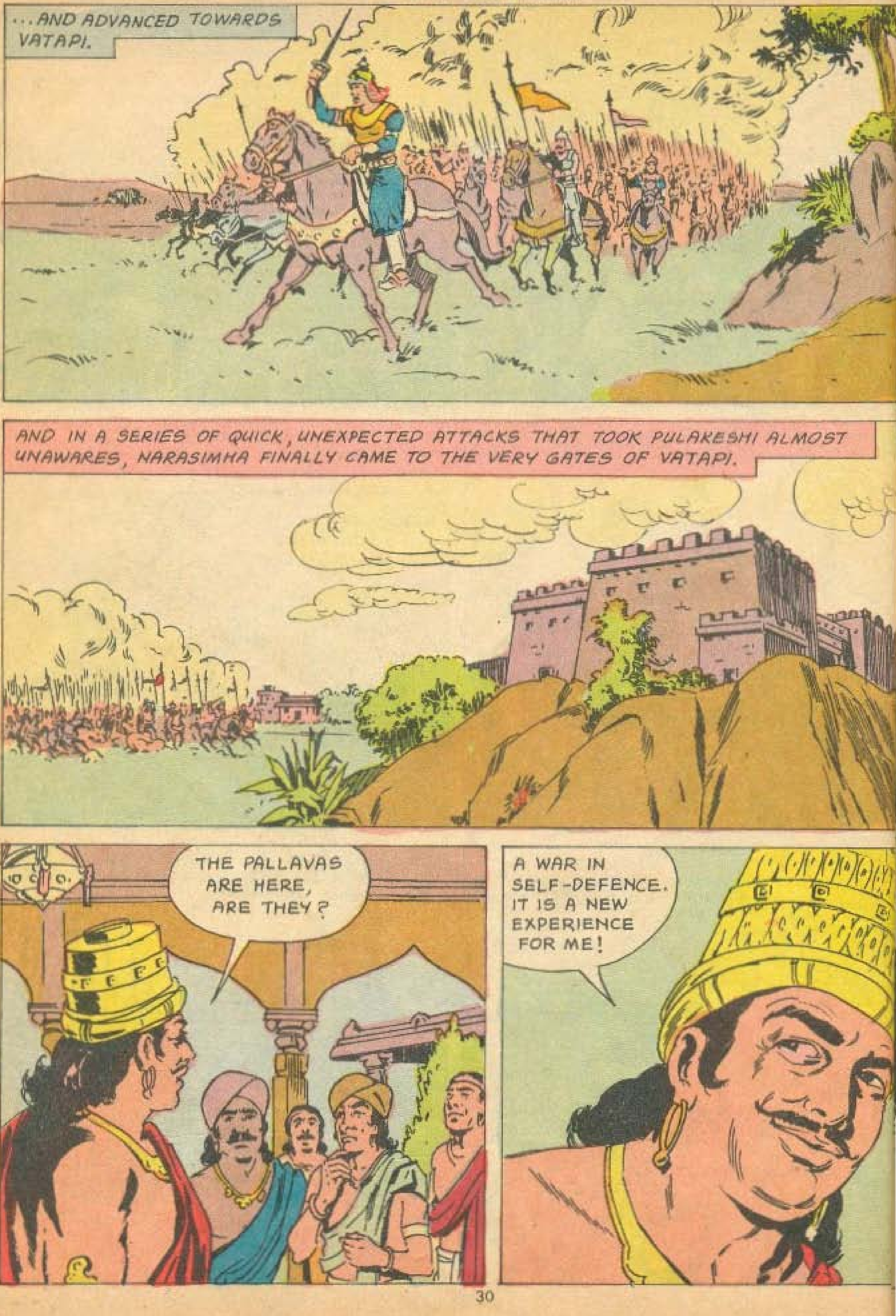


* BORN TO KADAMBA.

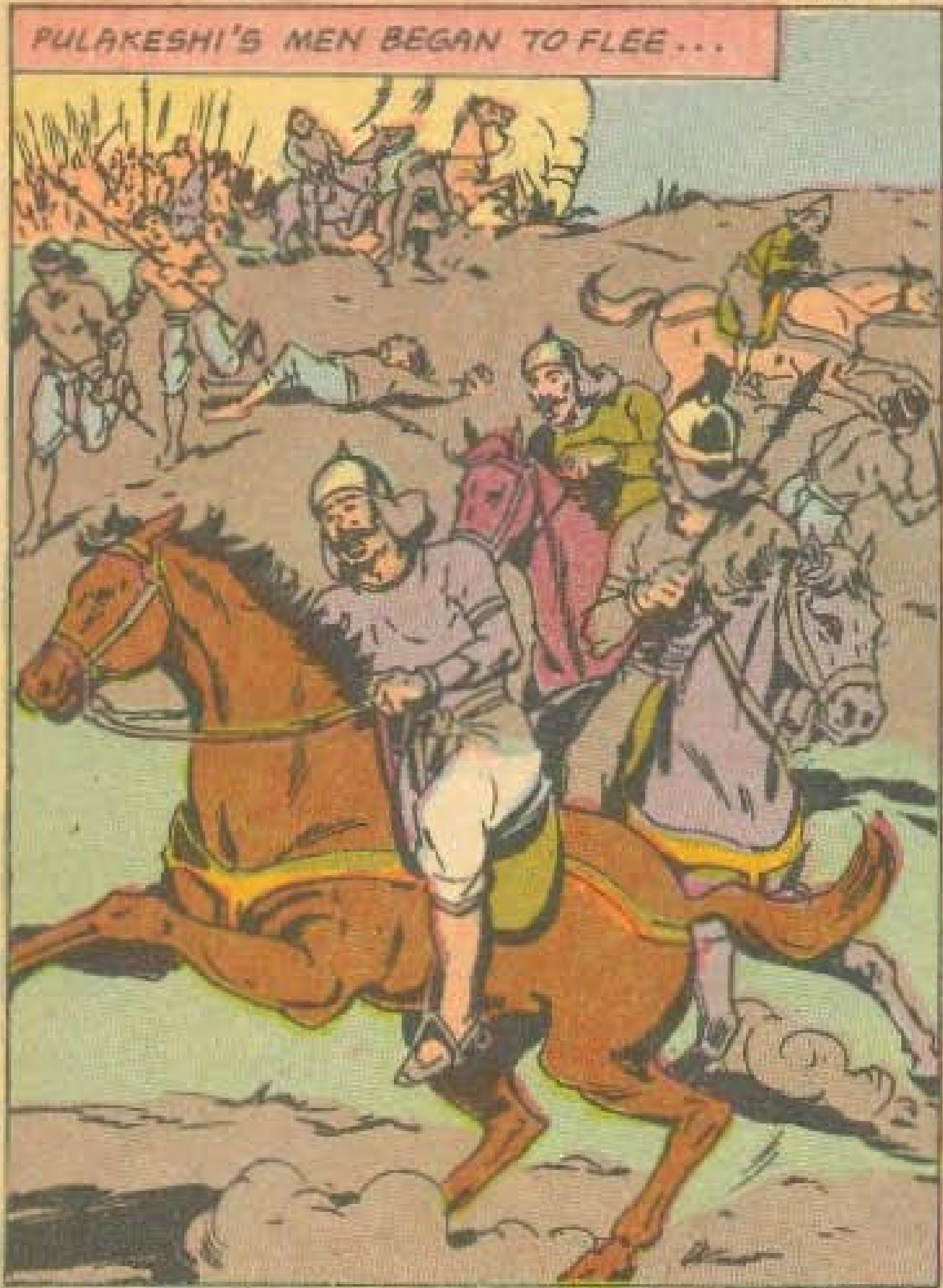


* HARSHA ALSO MEANS MIRTH OR HAPPINESS (JOY).
** PISHTA ALSO MEANS FLOUR.


AT PULLALUR NEAR KANCHEEPURAM, MAHENDRAVARMAN MET PULAKESHI...
...AND WAS DEFEATED. HE HAD TO HASTILY WITHDRAW FROM THE BATTLEFIELD.
PULAKESHI RETURNED TO VATAPI IN TRIUMPH.
AT KANCHEEPURAM THE PALLAVA KING NEVER RECOVERED FROM THE SHOCK AND HUMILIATION OF DEFEAT INFLICTED ON HIM BY PULAKESHI.
NARASIMHA, MY SON, I'VE FORFEITED THE RIGHT TO LIVE.
FATHER!
MAHENDRAVARMAN DIED A BROKEN-HEARTED MAN.
PULAKESHI, I WILL NOT FORGIVE YOU.
PALLAVA NARASIMHAVARMAN RAISED A MASSIVE ARMY...


...AND ADVANCED TOWARDS VATAPI.
AND IN A SERIES OF QUICK, UNEXPECTED ATTACKS THAT TOOK PULAKESHI ALMOST UNAWARES, NARASIMHA FINALLY CAME TO THE VERY GATES OF VATAPI.
THE PALLAVAS ARE HERE, ARE THEY?
A WAR IN SELF-DEFENCE. IT IS A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR ME!


THROW OPEN THE GATES OF THE FORT. AND I WILL LEAD MY MEN.
PULAKESHI FOUGHT FOR HIS HONOUR ...
...AND NARASIMHA TO SETTLE AN OLD SCORE.
SHOUTING WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS MEN, NARASIMHA KEPT UP THE PRESSURE ON THE CHALUKYAS.
KEEP IT UP — PRESS FORWARD, MY MEN!


PULAKESHI'S MEN BEGAN TO FLEE ...


... AND THE TRUTH DAWNED ON PULAKE
WITH THE FORCE OF A THUNDERBOLT.
I HAVE LOST THE BATTLE! OH, GOD!


AFTER THIS, WE DON'T COME ACROSS PULAKESHI IN HISTORY. THE STONE INSCRIPTIONS AND RAVIKEERTI'S AIHOLE PRASHASTI WHICH GIVE US ALL THIS INFORMATION BECOME SILENT AS IF NOT WANTING TO DISCLOSE THE TRAGIC END OF A GREAT KING.